

EXHIBIT 7

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Immigration agents seize 20 suspected illegal aliens

ACLU investigating to see if civil rights were violated

by *TERRY SMITH*

Federal immigration officers descended on the Wood River Valley over the weekend and scooped up some 20 people who are suspected of being illegal immigrants.

The raid by Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers has left a bitter taste in the mouths of at least one Blaine County family, and the American Civil Liberties Union of Idaho is investigating to see if civil rights were violated.

ICE officials have declined to comment on the raid, but Blaine County Sheriff's Detective Steve Harkins said the federal agents were from a "special fugitive unit" out of Boise that was searching for non-native convicted felons who have returned to the United States illegally.

Harkins, who wasn't directly involved in the raid, said Tuesday that he heard 21 people were arrested. Ketchum police spokesman Kim Rogers put the number at 20. She described some of the detainees as "Peruvian."

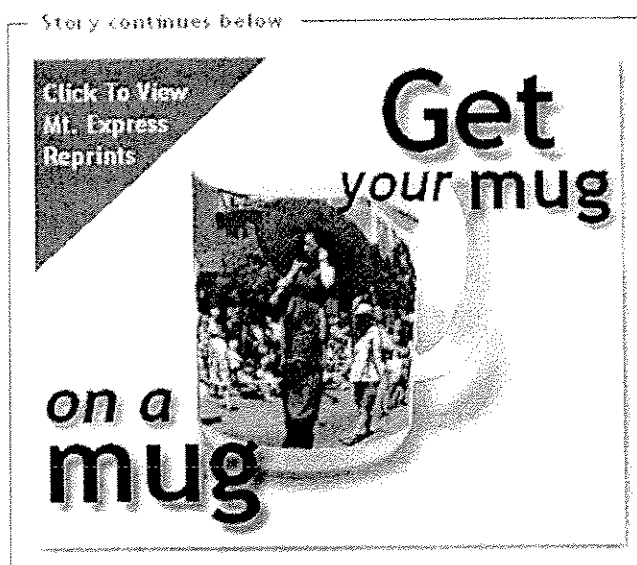
Harkins explained that not all the people arrested are necessarily convicted felons, since in the course of raids ICE agents will detain other suspects who are unable to demonstrate that they are U.S. citizens or legal residents.

Neither the sheriff's office nor Ketchum police were directly involved in the operation, but both local agencies assigned officers as uniformed escorts.

"As far as the actual operation, that wasn't us," said Ketchum Assistant Police Chief Mike McNeil. "All I know is they came in and requested our assistance."

ICE agents in unmarked white or black sport-utility vehicles were seen conducting pre-dawn raids in Ketchum and Bellevue on Saturday morning at about 6:30 a.m.

A Bellevue woman said ICE agents showed up at her door at the Westwood Mobile Home Park at about that time.



"They pounded on my door so hard that my walls shook," said Dana Ayala, a Filipino native and U.S. citizen who has lived in the Wood River Valley for 13 years. "My 19-year-old son opened the door to see what was the matter and six agents pushed their way into my home.

"They never informed us who they were, they just barged into our house. They never showed us a warrant."

Ayala said the agents later told her that they were looking for a "sexual predator" by the name of Luis Gonzales, someone she had never heard of and had never lived in her home.

"I have two teenage daughters," she said. "I'm not going to let a pedophile stay here."

Ayala said her children are U.S. citizens and her husband is a Mexican native who has legal residency in the United States.

She said the agents searched the home and questioned the occupants for about half an hour, were rude and abrupt and have left her family traumatized, especially her 18-year-old daughter who is mentally retarded.

"I would say that they're Cracker Jack cops," said Ayala. "You don't treat citizens that way. Not even so much as an apology. That's crazy. If they would have contacted the Bellevue Marshal's Office first they would have known who we are."

Jack Van Valkenburgh, executive director of ACLU of Idaho, said the ACLU is investigating the raid to determine if civil rights were violated.

"You don't have to be a citizen to have many of the constitutional rights afforded by the Bill of Rights," he said. "You can't vote, but you still have protection from unlawful search and seizures."

He said ICE agents are required to have search warrants and that people detained or questioned by the agents have the right to an attorney.

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